



# Buzzwords ...

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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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## Buzzwords No 48 December 1992

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- \* **US TOUR SOON**
- \* **\$6 MILLION OF MEAD**
- \* **MANUKA AT RISK**



"Sorry Santa, we accidentally deleted the Good Little Girls and Boys database. Did you need it urgently?"



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As predicted, the proposed protocol for Australian honey imports to New Zealand certainly hasn't gone away. Your executive has received a letter from the National Manager (Apiculture), Murray Reid, suggesting that the NBA sit down with MAF at the December executive meeting and debate this issue. It would appear that a revised protocol is in the pipeline.

Your executive is asking that this discussion with MAF be postponed until February because the time is too short to prepare for such a meeting, and also because our December agenda is already very full.

I cannot help but feel that senior officials at the highest levels of MAF are determined to carry out the government's policy on CER. Unfortunately, if EFB is introduced to this

country it won't affect such politicians and officials; it will be up to beekeepers to carry the financial can.

Beekeepers will not soon forget the winter and spring of 1992. It has been a hard and difficult season so far in most areas. No doubt the sugar suppliers will have had a profitable year! Nevertheless, conditions seem to be right for a good honey crop provided we get reasonable summer weather.

Pollination is very late in all parts of the country this year, with some areas reporting the latest kiwifruit flowering on record. As a result, there is some concern by beekeepers that their hives will come out of orchards too late to produce a decent honey crop. Lets hope the honey flow is late this year, like everything else so far.

Heather and I would like to extend to all NBA members and

their families a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. We hope that your beekeeping efforts will be well rewarded by a good honey crop; let's just hope that you can find time to enjoy a Christmas break.

Dudley Ward, president

## BIO-SECURITY BILL LOOMS

There's no doubt that a new political philosophy has emerged in the past few years in this country. No longer can the government be expected, as of right, to carry out many of the functions it has traditionally performed in New Zealand life. In almost every area of our society the politicians are casting a sharp eye over public services, and are asking fundamental questions about the "true" responsibilities of government.

Our own industry has certainly not escaped, and we all know now how the current government regards its former responsibilities for American foulbrood control. Still, beekeepers have always thought that at least the protection of our industry from the threat of exotic diseases would continue to be a proper function of government, and that legislation like the Apiaries Act would always be there to provide a strong foundation for industry development.

Now even these government duties appear to be under threat with the planned early introduction of something called the Bio-Security Bill. The bill is an attempt by the politicians to totally restructure the functions of non-human disease and pest control in this country, and appears to give over much of the obligation (and cost) for such control to the individual industries concerned. The effect could be for the government to cast off one of the most fundamental responsibilities it has in an economy based on primary production - the provision of agricultural security.

The bill seeks to consolidate a whole range of existing legislation, including the Animals, Plants, Apiaries, Poultry, Dog Control and Hydatids, Agricultural Pest Destruction, and Noxious Plants Acts. It is proposed that all the disease control activities found in these acts be treated in a common way, including import risk management, animal and plant quarantine, EDPR, endemic disease control, surveillance, and animal registers/brands.

As an idea, there's nothing really contentious in this "putting everything in one basket", although what was wrong with the acts remaining separate one must wonder. The real problem is that there is another (and much bigger) agenda in this proposed bill besides "legislative tidiness", and that relates to the control of disease itself.

Diseases, whether they are established (such as AFB), or exotic (such as parasitic mites or EFB), would only be controlled if a National (or perhaps Regional) Pest Management Strategy is in place. Any such Strategy would have to set out the objectives of control, the legal powers to be used, the organisation that would do the controlling, and of course, how the control would be funded.

We could have expected something like this for established diseases like AFB, but what must be worrying to all

beekeepers is the fact that this same system will also apply to exotics. Any minister (and not just the Minister of Agriculture, by the way), could propose a National Pest Management Strategy for some disease, so long as they could prove its importance and show where the funding would come from. However, if a minister failed to propose a Strategy for a particular disease on his/her own (probably because there isn't some great, over-riding national interest at stake), it would be up to the industry concerned to convince the government that the disease is a justifiable threat. The industry would then have to come up with its own Pest Management Strategy (including a means of payment) and get it adopted into law.

As an example, in the beekeeping industry we could see, on the one hand, a minister (maybe even the Minister of Health) proposing (and possibly funding) a Strategy for an Africanised honey bee Exotic Disease and Pest Response (because of public health concerns), while on the other hand, the industry itself would have to submit for approval to the Minister of Agriculture a (self-funding) Strategy for Varroa mite EDPR, since the industry would be seen by government as the major direct beneficiary.

So for an industry like ours, with a small income in dollar-terms, and huge pollination benefits to the economy which unfortunately don't show up in the national accounts, if we wanted government to help us out on the control of exotics we'd be back to the same argument that we made for AFB control. And if the government views our argument in the same way as it did before, beekeepers may have to pay for most of what they had always assumed was the government's agricultural security responsibility (including EDPR, active surveillance, and the apiary register).

As for the payment regime itself, the bill is likely to include provisions for industry levies for any Pest Management Strategy. The levy system looks to be a bit more workable than the Commodities Levy Act (see "Commodity Levy Farce", Buzzwords 42), although there is still provision for a veto if a "significant body" of affected persons express objections to the levy. There is also likely to be a proviso (and this one really is ominous) directing the Director-General to ensure that the costs not provided by Parliament for administering the act (as opposed to just running a Pest Management Strategy), are recovered by means such as levies "imposed" on users.

It is expected the bill will also include the normal provisions for powers of inspectors, use of quarantines, destruction of infected material, and maintenance of a register we've come to expect from the Apiaries Act; although, as you would imagine, in this case the powers won't be specific to any one industry. There is even a proposal for a "broad blanket" compensation provision for people affected during an emergency response. But this compensation would only be payable by the government, oddly enough, if a Pest Management Strategy for that particular disease was NOT in place.

While some of the provisions of the Bio-Security Bill are bad enough, what's worse is the fact that the government seems to want to "fast track" the passage of the bill through the House. We've known that the Bio-Security Bill was



coming for several years. The problem is that the specifics are only now being revealed. The government wants to introduce the bill to Parliament before the Christmas recess. As is common practice, the bill will then be referred to the Primary Production Select Committee, with the closing date for public submissions early in February. This doesn't give our industry (or anyone else, for that matter), much time to put together an effective response to the bill, especially since the January-February period falls right in the middle of the agricultural production year. The bill is scheduled for enactment, according to government sources, in May, 1993.

*Nick Wallingford, NBA Executive*

## BUZZWORDS BUREAUCRATIC GOBBLEDYGOOK AWARD

Proposed Bio-Security Bill, Section 83:

"Crown obligations - Notwithstanding section 3, no national or regional pest management strategy shall impose any cost on the Crown in respect of land owned or occupied by the Crown which is in excess of either that cost imposed on other owners or occupiers in a like situation or that cost which the Crown has agreed to accept from moneys appropriated by Parliament."

Translation:

the government won't pay anything more than anybody else for disease control on its own properties, unless the politicians vote them more money.

## US BEEKEEPERS TOUR

Final details have just been announced for a tour of our country by a group of US beekeepers. The group, consisting of about 20 commercial and hobbyist beekeepers from throughout the States, will be visiting New Zealand in the first two weeks of February 1993. The tour is being organised by Trevor Bryant, Te Puke, in conjunction with Global Nature Tours, a U.S. firm.

According to Trevor, the objectives of the tour are to introduce Americans to our beekeeping industry and to foster trade and development contacts for such products as honey and queen bees. The tour will spend a week each in the North Island and the South Island and will visit a good cross-section of beekeeping enterprises. The tour will also spend some time learning about other aspects of New Zealand agriculture and horticulture, including deer farming and kiwifruit growing.

New Zealand beekeepers should have plenty of opportunity to meet the tour party, according to Trevor. NBA branches throughout the country have been contacted and meetings and social functions are being arranged in a number of areas. Get in touch with your local branch secretary for details.

## CLINTON ON HONEY

Ronald Reagan may like eating pollen (to keep his hair black, no doubt), but he's not the only US president who's made it into the American beekeeping press. Overseas journals such as *The Speedy Bee* are now all abuzz about President-elect Clinton. The reason? During the recent election campaign, Clinton used the US honey subsidy programme (see *Buzzwords 45*) as a prime example of wasteful government spending. He promised to end the programme if he was elected president.

Now we doubt if that campaign promise was enough to tip the electoral balance (!), but obviously US beekeepers are worried that Clinton may in fact pull out the axe once he gets to the White House and chop both the honey loan programme and the buy back scheme which so affected world honey prices in the late 80's. He's in for a fight, however. The main supporters for the programme are congressmen in his own Democratic Party, led by House Agricultural Committee Chairman Kika de la Garza.

*The Speedy Bee, August 1992*

## LAKE ROTOITI WEEKEND

The Marlborough branch will be holding its deservedly famous "Lake Rotoiti Beekeepers Weekend" on February 21-22, 1993. A number of interesting sessions are planned, including presentations on manuka honey, pollen count and colour grading, AFB testing, mead making, and much, much more. Speakers who have been approached to attend include Alan Bougen from Comvita NZ, Dr. Peter Molan, Peter Bray from Airborne Honey, Dr. Mark Goodwin, and a visiting Canadian beekeeper (*I wonder who that could be? - ed.*).

All-up costs, including meals and accommodation for the whole weekend, are an amazingly low \$60 per adult, \$30 for children. Everything will be provided except your sleeping gear (sleeping blanket, linen, etc.). For more information call Murray Bush on (03) 578-3923 (work) or write to the Marlborough branch c/- 608 Old Renwick Rd, Blenheim. Registration closes February 5, 1993.

## NEW GISBORNE BREW

Gisborne's Harvest Wine company has won a \$6 million contract to supply 640,000 litres of mead to Korea over the next two years. The first shipment left Auckland for Seoul on November 12, with three container loads to follow each month. A total of 853,000 750ml bottles of mead, which is produced by fermenting honey solution with yeast, will be produced for the contract.

According to Brian Shanks, managing director of Harvest Wine, "the significance of the contract can be gauged by comparing the figures with New Zealand grape wine exports. The value of this country's entire grape wine exports in the 1991-92 year was \$34.7 million."

## HONEY INDUSTRY TRUST FUND

Applications for funding close on 15 August and 15 February. Forms available from the NBA, PO Box 4048, Wellington.

Harvest Wine, which is also a major cider maker, won the mead contact against competition from a number of countries, including Britain. Shanks says, "the quantities we will now be producing will make us the biggest mead producer in the world."

Mead has been credited with health and fertility qualities from ancient times, and the Korean trading company which is importing it has spent a year planning a marketing campaign aimed partly at the gift market for weddings. According to tradition, drinking mead is supposed to guarantee the birth of a son within a year of marriage. The Korean promotion will seek to encourage parents to offer mead to guests at weddings.

Initial contact with the Korean trading company was made through the Trade Development Board of New Zealand. Samples were sent to Korea and the president of the Korean company visited the Gisborne plant before the contract was signed.

Brian Shanks says one impact on the Gisborne economy will be the benefit to beekeepers. "We will require large quantities of honey, and this will help beekeepers who have relied on regular income from kiwifruit pollination."

No one in New Zealand has ever made such large volumes of mead all at once, according to Shanks, and Harvest Wine has had to devise specialised equipment. "Mead is quite hard to make compared with grape and fruit wines because honey has natural anti-bacterial properties which tend to inhibit fermentation. We have spent two-and-a-half years on research and development of our techniques." The company won a silver medal for mead at the 1990 competitions of the Fruit Wine Makers of New Zealand.

Gisborne Herald, November 4, 1992

## CAPE MANUKA AT RISK

A forestry scheme for the East Cape region, announced in the government's 1992 budget, may put at risk some of the largest remaining stands of manuka and kanuka found anywhere in New Zealand. This is the conclusion of a review done by Nigel Hailstone for the Environment and Conservation Organisations of New Zealand, and published in the October issue of the association newsletter, *EcoLink*.

The scheme involves planting some 200,000 ha of exotic forests in the next 28 years, using substantial government subsidies. The planting is intended to help stabilise erosion problems in the region, which has been devastated by marginal land clearance and Cyclone Bola. The project is also expected to provide new employment opportunities and economic rehabilitation in one of the poorest parts of the country.

Unfortunately, however, the project is set to do a lot more than just plant the eroded areas of the Cape. The plan, according to *EcoLink*, is to also clear for forestry up to 75,000 ha of kanuka and manuka, much of it mature stands with plants 15m high and 750mm in diameter.

According to *EcoLink*, the clearing doesn't make sense, especially from an erosion point of view. The native ground cover is doing an excellent job of preventing erosion in those areas where it still exists. And the Forest Research Institute, which has studied the problem, believes that scrub clearance for the purpose of plantation forestry will make the land susceptible to erosion for as long as six years, initially, and then after every harvest.

So why clear the manuka? The real reason seems to be that the most economic places to plant the pine plantations, especially from a harvesting point of view, are in the stabilised (and easier access) areas, not in the areas actually suffering the greatest erosion.

The project also fails to take into consideration the economic value of the manuka, both as a producer of antibiotic honey and as a source of essential oils. According to Barry Foster, Poverty Bay NBA branch president, if the land where manuka already exists was left to regenerate, it could become a renewable resource for honey. There is also an oil extraction project already in existence in the area set up by the former crop research division of DSIR. Manuka oil has unique medicinal properties and manuka oil production is a significant industry in Australia.

Barry attended a recent meeting in Gisborne on the issue called by concerned locals, and spoke on the manuka honey antibacterial work being conducted by Dr. Peter Molan at the University of Waikato. As a result, the group has asked Dr. Molan to speak at a public meeting on manuka honey, sometime before the new year. According to Barry, "the aim is to inform the public and people most concerned (such as the District Council) about the potential loss of unique resources that we know so little about at present."



## BUZZWORDS IS ...

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